Recorded songs of Lata Mangeshkar

Lata Mangeshkar (1929 – 2022) has provided playback to Indian films for more than sixty years. Most of her songs are recorded on Shellac, Vinyl & are also available on Cassettes and Compact Discs. Lot of textual material is available in books and articles in number of Indian languages, and there is hardly anything left that is not yet documented. However, very little is known about storage, preservation and documentation of her recorded songs.

In 1974, the Guinness Book of Records listed Lata Mangeshkar as the most recorded artiste in human history, stating that she had recorded "not less than 25,000 solo, duet and chorus backed songs in 20 Indian languages" between 1948 and 1974. There was no supporting document published or source mentioned. Later editions of the Guinness Book said Lata Mangeshkar had sung no less than 30,000 songs from 1948 to 1987. Today, when searched, the Guinness Book of Records website shows no results for Lata Mangeshkar.

Around 1990, Mr. Vishwas Nerurkar of Mumbai published a Geet Kosh titled ‘Gandhar Swaryatra’ enlisting about 5,500 Hindi film songs of Lata Mangeshkar recorded from 1945 to 1989. The book is available online on number of websites and stores even today. In the coverage of her sad demise, several channels and newspapers used the same old figures that the Guinness Book of Records removed long ago. One TV channel reported even 50,000 songs in 36 Indian languages, whereas total number of Hindi film songs from 1931 to 2021 is less than 1, 00, 000 songs. This is the apathy and carelessness in the documentation of the recorded songs of most popular singer in India, and this incorrect information will stay over for ever. Lata Mangeshkar always preferred to remain silent on these numbers.

Several years ago, I was in Solapur with my collector friend Mr. Jayant Raleraskar. His son Master Nikhil asked me several questions on records, discographies and various numbers and

information printed on the labels. He also asked me to assign a project that he can take up. I picked up the ‘Gandhar’ book from the shelf, explained it to him and suggested to search the songs listed. Several years passed and I forgot about it. But he hadn’t. By the time he entered college he was ready with a DVD of about 5000 Hindi films mentioned in the book. Today, these are available online - https://archive.org/details/MudritSangeet

Mr. Suman Chaurasiya from Indore is a diehard records collector and devotee of the songs of Lata Mangeshkar. He used to come to visit Mumbai’s infamous ‘Chor Bazar’ and would tell us about his dream of a museum in the name of Lata Mangeshkar. We would laugh on his back, but in 2008, he really came up with a two story building named ‘Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Record Sangrahalay’ near Indore. His strong collection of over 7500 records is waiting for the visitors at village Pigdambar, 40 miles from Indore.



Mr. Snehasis Chatterjee is a music teacher in Kolkata and great fan and collector of Lataji's music in recorded form. From last thirty two years, his dream is to publish books on Lata songs sung in various languages giving full song texts. He has already published Bengali & Marathi song books along with few more volumes of the proposed Geet Kosh. Rest of the volumes are under preparation.

http://latageetkosh.blogspot.com/2006/05/me-my-work.html



Such is the magic of her voice and music that can't be seen but only perceived through human senses. All the three efforts mentioned above were taken up much before the arrival of internet and omnipresent social media.

Around 2010, explosion on social media networks gave a new dimension to the wonderful world of collection, preservation and

dissemination using digital platforms, and with a professional touch. Within few hours of her demise, US based 'Spotify' company came up with a playlist of her songs titled 'This is Lata Mangeshkar', visited by over 50,000 persons within 24 hours.

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/37i9dQZF1DZ06evO3yp1q2

In last few days, most of the WhatsApp group members are busy in forwarding condolence messages and songs of Lata Mangeshkar. When the craze is over they would realise that except the voice of Lataji they have no more information on what they have forwarded. Curious ones would begin to search on Google and will land on 'My Swar' and 'Discogs' websites. The former one is Desi Company dealing with the details of the Hindi films songs. 'Discogs' is American company documenting metadata of over twenty five lac audio releases. They have over six lac active members busy in uploading metadata. If we search for Lata Mangeshkar, over 500 pages are shown. Each page contains details of the release viz. photos of sleeves, inlay cards, labels and track details. Each and every item is for free download.

If one wants to upload and listen to the songs, we have now many possibilities, most popular being YouTube. If the post is blocked, it's easy to migrate on another platform, with the data files stored with multiple backups. For long term preservation, San Francisco based twenty five years old 'archive.org' is the best option to upload the files. There too over 500 posts are uploaded by the members in the name of Lata Mangeshkar.

https://archive.org/details/MudritSangeet?query=lata+mangeshkar

So, in preserving the recordings of Lata Mangeshkar, we have now both physical artefacts and digital files. Physical releases were possible due to the pioneering work of Thomas Alva Edison and his home phonograph that will be 145 years old at the end of this year. Around 1990, in one of the TV interviews, Lataji

herself asked if future generations would listen to the music of our times, knowing well that the honest answer is ‘No, they won’t’. While collecting and disseminating the recordings from 1902, collectors have experienced this in case of many senior artists. Each generation has its own music and the former one has to go in the oblivion, in the archival vaults and wait for someone to visit and listen to. Ever expanding and omnipresent social media networks and digital platforms will serve the purpose until something new and novel comes up.

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